

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

**Reviewed and updated: March 2022**

**Next review: April 2025**

**Status: non-statutory**

This policy should be read with reference to the following policies:

- Internal data security policy.
- ICT and use of the internet and intranet by staff policy.
- ICT and use of the internet and intranet by pupils' policy.
- E-safety policy
- Staff professional identity protection policy.
- Staff email policy.
- Use of personally owned devices by staff policy

### **Background**

As far as schools are concerned the term social media refers to any interactive Web 2.0 platform, including social networks, internet forums and blogs. Given the rapid expansion of social media, it is impossible to list all possible types of media. While acknowledging the benefits of social media and the internet it is also important to recognise that risk to the safety and well-being of users is ever-changing and that the misuse/abuse of these facilities can range from inappropriate to criminal and schools need to have mechanisms in place to deal with misuse of social media. Misuse can be summarised as:

#### **Contact**

- Commercial (tracking, harvesting personal information).
- Aggressive (being bullied, harassed or stalked).
- Sexual (meeting strangers, being groomed).
- Values (self-harm, unwelcome persuasions).

#### **Conduct**

- Commercial (illegal downloading, hacking, gambling, financial scams).
- Aggressive (bullying or harassing another).
- Sexual (creating and uploading inappropriate material).
- Values (providing misleading info or advice).

#### **Content**

- Commercial (adverts, spam, sponsorship, personal information).

- Aggressive (violent/hateful content).
- Sexual (pornographic or unwelcome sexual content).
- Values (bias, racism, misleading info or advice).

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### Introduction

The DFE document 'Teachers' Standards', published in July 2011, expects teachers, in their personal and professional conduct, to 'uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school'. At **Elthorne Park High** school we understand that this statement covers their use of social media.

At **Elthorne Park High** school we expect students to use social media safely and in a way that does not cause harm or distress to others.

For the purposes of this policy, social media refers to any interactive Web 2.0 platform, including social networks, internet forums and blogs. Given the rapid expansion of social media, it is impossible to list all possible types of media. Staff should assume that all online activity is covered by this policy and should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use, both at work and in their personal situation.

While acknowledging the benefits of social media and the internet it is also important to recognise that risk to the safety and well-being of users is ever-changing and that the misuse/abuse of these facilities can range from inappropriate to criminal. **Elthorne Park High school** has this policy in place to deal with any misuse of social media.

### Objectives and targets

This policy applies to students, teachers, support staff, governors, volunteers and all who work on the school site.

This policy takes account of all the appropriate legislation and sets out to:

- Assist those who work with pupils to work safely and responsibly, to monitor their own standards of behaviour and to prevent the abuse of their position of trust with pupils.
- Offer a code of practice relevant to social media for educational, personal and recreational use.
- Advise that, in the event of unsafe and/or unacceptable behaviour, disciplinary or legal action (including gross misconduct leading to dismissal) will be taken if necessary in order to support safer working practice and minimise the risk of malicious allegations against staff and others who have contact with pupils.

### Action plan

#### In the curriculum

Online safety will be included in the relationship and sex education curriculum from 2020. Teachers will be trained to re-inforce the importance of online safety and awareness of the benefits and drawbacks of social media for pupils.

Pupils are taught:

- That their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online and on social media do not differ from those experienced elsewhere, and the same expectations of good behaviour apply and are expected.
- That sharing material online can be fraught with risk because sharers can disseminate material widely and much further than anticipated; that it may be extremely difficult to remove such online material and can cause much distress as a consequence.
- The impact of viewing harmful content online:
  - Particularly that sexually-explicit material can be very damaging to self-respect.
  - That viewing and sharing indecent images of children, including those viewed and shared by children, is a serious criminal offence carrying severe penalties.

### **Use of social media within school**

Staff are not permitted to access social media websites from the school's computers or other school device at any time unless authorised to do so by a member of the senior management team.

However, staff may use their own devices to access social media websites while they are in school, outside of session times. Excessive use of social media, which could be considered to interfere with productivity, will be considered a disciplinary matter.

Staff should assume that anything they write (regardless of their privacy settings) could become public so should ensure that they are professional, maintaining a clear distinction between their personal and professional lives.

Any use of social media made in a professional capacity must not:

- Bring the school into disrepute.
- Breach confidentiality.
- Breach copyrights of any kind.
- Bully, harass or be discriminatory in any way.
- Be defamatory or derogatory.

### **Use of social media outside of school**

The school appreciates that staff may make use of social media in a personal capacity. However, staff must be aware that if they are recognised from their profile as being associated with the school, opinions they express could be considered to reflect the school's opinions and so could damage the reputation of the school. For this reason, staff should avoid mentioning the school by name, or any member of staff by name or position. Opinions offered should not bring the school into disrepute, breach confidentiality or copyright, or bully, harass or discriminate in any way.

### **General considerations**

Those working with children have a duty of care and a statutory duty to report signs of potential radicalisation (see paragraph below) but also need to be on the lookout for cyber bullying and other activities on social media which might affect the mental health of pupils. Staff will receive regular training on safeguarding matters, including online safety.

Staff are expected to adopt high standards of behaviour to retain the confidence and respect of colleagues and pupils both within and outside of school. They should maintain appropriate boundaries and manage personal information effectively so that it cannot be misused by third parties e.g. for 'cyber-bullying' or identity theft.

When using social media staff and others should:

- Never share work login details or passwords.
- Keep personal phone numbers private.
- Never give personal email addresses to pupils or parents.
- Restrict access to certain groups of people on their social media sites and pages.
- Not make 'friends' of pupils at the school. This could potentially be construed as 'grooming'.
- Report to senior management any attempt by pupils to contact them and firmly and politely inform the pupil that such contact is not acceptable
- Carefully consider contact with a pupil's family members because this may give rise to concerns over objectivity and/or impartiality.
- Keep any communications with pupils transparent and professional and should only use the school's systems for communications. (If there is any doubt about whether communication between a pupil/parent and member of staff is acceptable and appropriate a member of the senior management team should be informed so that they can decide how to deal with the situation.)

Before joining the school, new employees should check any information they have posted on social media sites and remove any post that could cause embarrassment or offence.

Training that covers issues such as privacy settings, appropriate contact between teachers, pupils and parents and the need to ensure a clear distinction between their professional and private lives will be given to all staff.

### **Misuse of social media**

While acknowledging the benefits of social media and the internet it is also important to recognise that risk to the safety and well-being of users is ever-changing and that the misuse/abuse of these facilities can range from inappropriate to criminal. Misuse can be summarised as follows:

#### **Contact**

- Commercial (tracking, harvesting personal information).
- Aggressive (being bullied, harassed or stalked).
- Sexual (meeting strangers, being groomed).
- Values (self-harm, unwelcome persuasions).

#### **Conduct**

- Commercial (illegal downloading, hacking, gambling, financial scams).

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**Disciplinary action**

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action under the school's disciplinary policy. Serious breaches of this policy, such as incidents of bullying or of social media activity causing damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.

Students, staff and volunteers must be aware of what is considered to be 'criminal' when using social media or the internet and electronic communication in general.

While the list below is not exhaustive, it provides some guidance in assessing the seriousness of incidents as well as determining appropriate actions.

All incident types below are considered criminal in nature but incidents would be subject to a full investigation in order to determine whether a crime has been committed or not.

- Copyright infringement through copying diagrams, texts and photos without acknowledging the source.
- Misuse of logins (using someone else's login).
- Distributing, printing or viewing information on the following:
  - Soft-core pornography.
  - Hate material.
  - Drugs.
  - Weapons.
  - Violence.
  - Racism.
- Distributing viruses.
- Hacking sites.
- Gambling.

- Accessing age restricted material.
- Bullying of anyone.
- Viewing, production, distribution and possession of indecent images of children.
- Grooming and harassment of a child or young person.
- Viewing, production, distribution and possession of extreme pornographic images.
- Buying or selling stolen goods.
- Inciting religious hatred and acts of terrorism.
- Downloading multimedia (music and films) that has copyright attached. (Although this is illegal most police forces would treat this as a lower priority than the cases above).

### **Responding to misuse/incidents**

The school policies and protocols on child protection, safeguarding and e-safety *must be* followed if any apparent, suspected or actual misuse appears to involve illegal or inappropriate activity:

- Child sexual abuse images.
- Adult material which potentially breaches the Obscene Publications Act.
- Criminally racist material.
- Other criminal conduct, activity or materials.
- Potential radicalisation or extremism.

Any actions online that have an impact on the school and can potentially lower the school's (or someone in the school's) reputation in some way, or are deemed as being inappropriate, will *always* be responded to.

In the event that any member of staff, student or parent/carer is found to be posting libellous or inflammatory comments on social networking sites, this will be addressed by the school in the first instance. If appropriate, disciplinary action will result. However, where necessary, the police will be involved and/or legal action pursued.

The current Criminal Prosecution Service (CPS) guidance 'Guidelines on prosecuting cases involving communications sent via social media' came into effect on 20 June 2013 (revised 2018) and sets out the approach that prosecutors should take when making decisions in relation to cases where it is alleged that criminal offences have been committed by the sending of a communication via social media. These guidelines are helpful when used alongside school employment and disciplinary policies in cases where staff misuse may be the issue.

### ***Facebook or other Social Media Platforms (for incidents of cyberbullying or inappropriate behaviour)***

- If you know the identity of the perpetrator, contact their parents or, in the case of older children, the young person themselves, to ask that the offending content be removed.

- Failing that, having kept a copy of the page or message in question, delete the content and take action as appropriate.
- For messages, the 'delete and report/block user facilities' are found in the 'Actions' dropdown on the page on which the message appears.
- For whole pages, the 'unfriend and report/block user facilities' are at the bottom of the left hand column.
- Always try to cite which of the Facebook or other Social Media platform terms and conditions have been violated at [www.facebook.com/terms.php](http://www.facebook.com/terms.php) or community standards at [www.facebook.com/communitystandards](http://www.facebook.com/communitystandards).
- Note that Facebook are more alert to US law than UK. The process should be anonymous.
- To remove a post from a profile, hover over it and on the right there will be a cross to delete it.
- To report abuse or harassment, email [abuse@facebook.com](mailto:abuse@facebook.com). Facebook will acknowledge receipt of your email and start looking into your complaint within 24 hours. They will get back to you within 72 hours of receiving your complaint.
- If all else fails, support the victim, if they wish, to click the 'Click CEOP' button [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk).
- If the victim is determined to continue using Facebook, they might want to delete their account and start again under a different name. Deletion can be undertaken via [https://ssl.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show\\_form=delete\\_account](https://ssl.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=delete_account).
- They should be made aware of the privacy issues that might have given rise to their problem in the first place:
  - You will not bully, intimidate, or harass any user (1.3.6).
  - You will not provide any false personal information on Facebook, or create an account for anyone other than yourself without permission (4.1).
  - You will not post content or take any action on Facebook that infringes or violates someone else's rights or otherwise violates the law (5.1).

### ***Concerns about potential radicalisation***

Staff have a duty of care to their pupils and a statutory duty to report signs of potential radicalisation (the prevent duty). Staff need to be aware that those attempting to groom youngsters for radicalisation are known to work through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Ask.fm, Instagram, Tumblr and closed peer-to-peer networks such as WhatsApp, Kik, SureSpot and Viber.

### **Social Media Postings – Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse**

Staff, parents and students may be aware of the website 'Everyone's Invited' (2021) an anti-rape movement organisation based in the United Kingdom. Their website invites people to anonymously share their sexual assault, harassment and rape culture testimonies. Participants have been invited to name their school/organisation. Many of the stories are from people who are now adults but some students currently attending schools, colleges and universities.

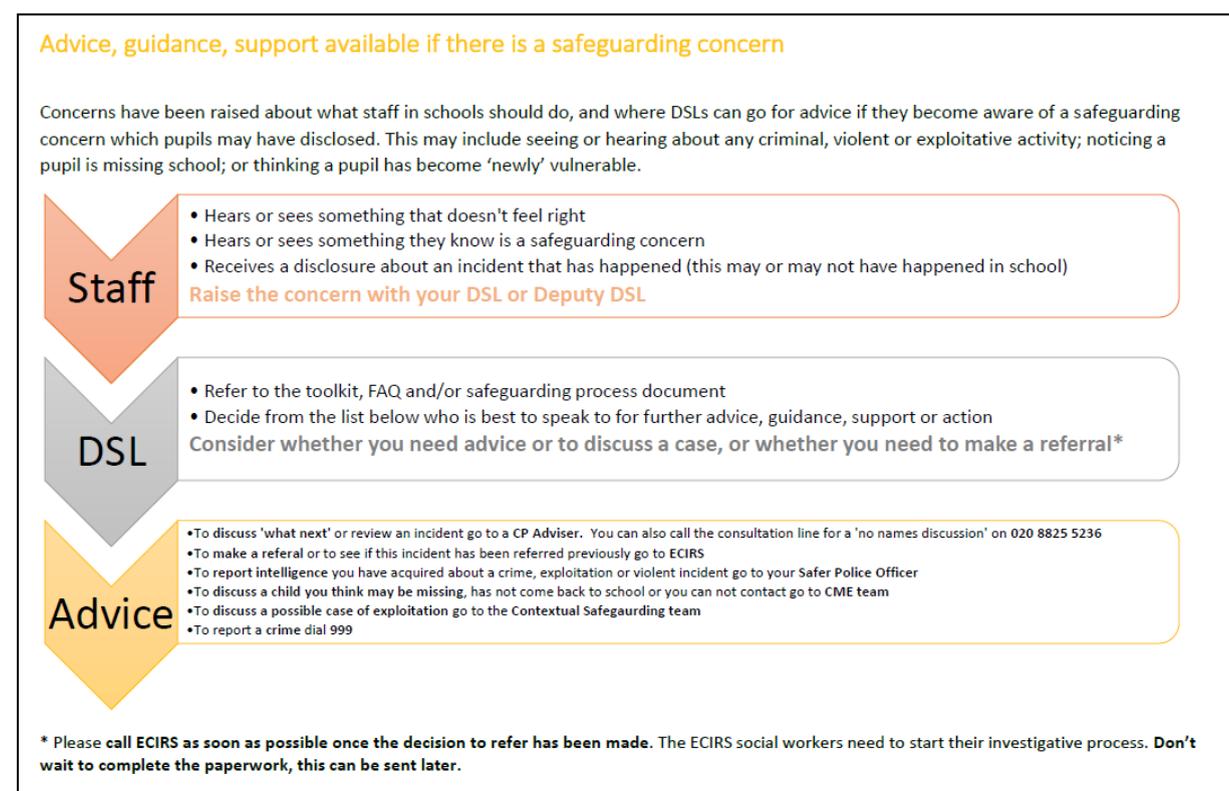
Ealing's Safeguarding Children Partnership is working with the London network of Safeguarding in Education Leads and Local Authority Designated officers to work with named schools. There will be a London LSCP response to the website to offer support to schools in reviewing their safeguarding systems.

### NSPCC helpline

The DfE have commissioned a national helpline run by the NSPCC. This can be accessed by students and parents (lie from Thursday 1st April 2021) and the number is 0800 136 663. The helpline is free and anonymous and will be open Monday to Friday 8am – 10pm and Saturday to Sunday 9am – 6pm. The NSPCC will signpost support and make safeguarding referrals to Local Authorities in the usual way.

### Safeguarding support flowchart

It is important that all students and staff know where to go to report concerns and to ensure that schools can take specific action where appropriate. The flowchart below outlines the process that the school will follow including stages to report incidents to the Police or Children's Services.



### Monitoring and reviewing

The school will monitor the impact of the policy using logs of reported incidents and it will be reviewed by the governors annually, or more regularly, in the light of any incidents that have taken place, significant new developments in the use of the technologies, or perceived new threats as advised by the e-safety committee or others).

**Next review due:** March 2025